1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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Kurtatchi

tree, also known generally as 'bush banana', of which the native name is *wirtsun*; the liquid contained in this is not good for drinking. Its trunk is black, much thicker, and consists of a single stem only. Neither *oban* nor *wirtsun* produces edible fruit, except for parrots. The leaves of the former, but not the latter, are frequently used to cover cooking-pots in which taro, &c., is being boiled.

No fermented drink of any sort is manufactured, and fortunately the natives have no access to European intoxicants, traders and planters being forbidden by the Government to supply them with beer or whisky, on pain of heavy penalties. Their comments on the behaviour of drunken white folk are not flattering.

MEALS AND MANNERS

Two meals a day are generally prepared, one in the morning, before setting out for the day's activities, and one at dusk, after returning from the taro garden, the bush, or the fishing grounds. There is much impatience if food is not immediately forthcoming when wanted. '*Io to met a bios!*' is the exact equivalent of our 'I am dying of hunger!'

They begin their day at sunrise, but they do not immediately eat their meal. They will sit or stroll about in the sun, enjoying its warmth before it rises high enough to become uncomfortably hot. At their leisure the women prepare some taro, either by putting some on to boil or by uncovering the oven where it has been cooking slowly all night. Fish are often eaten cold, having been cooked the day before and put aside wrapped up in leaves, or they may be heated on the embers. A typical meal which I shared with them at this time of day consisted of boiled taro, a quantity of small shell-fish, boiled, the water in which these had been cooked, and two kinds of bananas, one boiled and the other roasted on hot stones.

After taking their time over this meal they disperse to their several devices, taking with them some cold taro in a coco-nut-leaf basket, to eat at intervals during the day or during rest intervals en route if they are going a journey. Any taro still remaining will be put into a similar basket and hung up in the rafters of the hut, where any member of the household can help himself whenever he feels inclined.

The second meal of the day is considered the principal one. The women set about preparing it as soon as they come back from

5: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930)1935
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prove under them" (Dymock, p. 600, quoting from Dutt's *Hindu Materia Medica*). 752 278

For burns, the leaves of *rakot* (*Oldenlandia paniculata*) are squeezed between the hands and the juice allowed to drop on to the burnt skin. The burn may also be painted with *oin*, and I have seen sea water poured over it.

Warts (*pisis*) are attributed to the fact that one of the food taboos has been broken. A small boy who was badly affected was said to have brought them on himself by eating sugar-cane, which is taboo to little children. Nothing is done for them. 753

Two prescriptions in my list apply to spear or arrow wounds. The bruised leaves of *wiakun* (*Wedelia biflora*) are heated, and the sap squeezed on to the wound "to make it heal quickly." If the head of the arrow remains embedded, the roots of *pupuna* (*Dryopteris Milneana* or *truncata*) are chewed with the betel-mixture and the saliva spat on to the wound. They say that this makes the arrow-head go further in so that the wound will heal over it, that its presence does no harm, and that healing is painless. 752 273

Affections of the Internal Organs

Next to those dealing with skin diseases, the largest number of prescriptions in my collection concerns various conditions which appear to be disturbances of the digestive system, though the descriptions are often so vague that it is difficult to be sure exactly what is meant. 757

"If a person has eaten something bad" he is given the scraped root of *wakop* chewed with the betel-mixture. Swallowing this is said to induce vomiting. An emetic prepared in the same manner from the root of *wamut* is given for stomach-ache. Unfortunately, neither of these trees could be identified, but I have included them as evidence that the use of the emetic is known to these natives.

Indigestion is attributed to eating too much or unsuitable food. Certain articles of food are avoided by some individuals for this reason, even, occasionally, their greatest delicacy, pig's fat. A pain "running from side to side" is said to be caused by eating hot taro at the same time as cold taro. Often no treatment is [753]